

Plattsburgh City Council
Quality of Life Committee
April 29th, 5:30
Minutes

Present: Councilors Kelly (Ward 2), Dowdle, (Ward 3), Kasper, (Ward 5), Kretser (Ward 6), Superintendent Brodi, Engineer Farrington, Superintendent Peters

Past projects:

The meeting began with a review of projects and initiatives concerning City beautification that have taken place in the past. Residents referenced:

- The dog waste removal ordinances, which is being addressed by Councilor Armstrong with help from June Foley,
- The past recognition of Plattsburgh as a Tree City by the Arbor Foundation, which lasted into the early 90's. Cindy Bentley expressed interest in resurrecting a Tree Council to offer direction and support for increasing the number of trees in the City. Engineer Farrington referred to a matching DEC grant that gives us a fund of 50k for trees. Upon further discussion, the committee decided to re-establish the Tree Council with Cindy and Pat Ostrander as co-directors,
- The annual litter Clean-up Days,
- Downtown flower barrels, which failed because store owners did not take care of them,
- Flower baskets on light poles, which were funded by the City and contracted to a local business. This ended with budget reductions,
- Installation of welcoming signs,
- Operation PRIDE that ran successfully for a month from 1971-1976 (Principle Recycle Involvement Development Environment). Jann Shambo was instrumental in this program and has kept the records from this program.
- Adopt a Spot, which Engineer Farrington noted is still active. Diane Chanowsky commented that it might be effective offer groups \$100 incentive start-up bonuses to adopt a spot.

Areas of interest

Councilor Kasper asked for input on areas in the City that need attention for beautification, noting that the entry points to the City were of great interest, particularly N. Margaret. Al Folsom pointed out that the railroad station is an eyesore and creates a terrible impression of the City for those who pass by on the train. Diane mentioned the dog parks, and how important attractive dog parks are for those who wish to live in the City. Linda Ward spoke of the entrance into downtown from Broad and Cornelia and how unattractive and unwelcoming those points are, and pointed out that the MacDonough Monument area is a

perfect place for beautification, and pretty much everyone agreed that the small park off of Margaret street that connects with Durkee St. is begging for beautification.

The conversation then turned to housing blights. This was a very spirited discussion during which residents made it clear that they do not think that Plattsburgh can truly be beautiful and attractive to tourists or businesses until housing codes are strictly enforced, or until codes are written in such a way that houses cannot go vacant or untended. Becky assured the group that the Mayor, Council, and City Inspector are currently discussing this problem and recognize the urgency of addressing it.

Becky noted that there are three categories of action that needed to be taken for beautification:

- 1) those that concern ordinances and enforcement, which is the responsibility of City government,
- 2) Long-term projects that can be planned and possibly funded through numerous beautification grants,
- 3) Near-term projects that be carried out this summer and provide a way to immediately be active

Specific ideas:

- Angela Jennette recommended using the City website to administer a beautification survey to residents so that we can find out what people would like to see for beautification. She also felt that we need to get local volunteer groups and students involved with beautification. Cindy Bentley introduced her mother-in-law, Minnie, who lives at Lake Forest and is responsible, with other residents, for creating a flower garden there, making the point that beautification is a skill that crosses all ages.
- Everyone expressed a desire to have a City clean-up day, and Superintendent Brodi informed us that he will provide the bags, gloves, and reflector vests. If the group can agree to a date then he can see if any other group is scheduled for that day.
- Superintendent Peters remarked that the City needs a branding that is more dynamic than the "Lake City" designation, and a logo that captures our spirit. He also noted that 25% of our population is below the poverty line so we need to take that in context of who we are serving. There was some discussion of our motto, "Virtue is its own reward," and how that refers to a community where people are invested in each other. The possibility of a City flag was raised, as the Mayor had expressed interest in having a new design.

- Lil Kasper spoke about the beauty of wildflowers along roadsides, and there was further discussion of how it would be desirable to have native flower species planted in the City. For instance, Susan Lavaque commented that we could have a flower garden in Trinity Park where children and students could visit and become education about indigenous plant species.
- Becky spoke of her idea for customers and gardening shops to donate an extra six-pack of flowers for people who would like to beautify their space but cannot afford it.
- Eric Rucker suggested a way for people who would like to garden to connect with gardeners by having “the extra sixpack” be distributed with a note that has the name and number of a helper gardener. Susan suggested that we have a day in front of City Hall that we would advertise for people to come and get starter kits, with gardening advice available at that time. Kasper agreed, indicating that she and Lil were thinking of offering starter buckets with a hand trowel and some wildflower seeds. Linda encouraged everyone to make use of the local gardening businesses to get expert advice on further ideas to beautify the City.
- Someone stated, to our dismay, that the ferry landing in Burlington has real flowers in planters, while the landing in Plattsburgh has artificial flowers. Lil volunteered to look into that.

Wrap-up:

Becky will put the minutes together and make a list of projects and possibilities for people to choose what interests them – perhaps as teams. Sandra McNeil created a draft organizational chart that we can use to give ourselves some

helpful structure:

